



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO

GOVERNOR

MIKE D. McDANIEL, Ph.D.

SECRETARY

July 12, 2007

Robert A. Robinson
Managing Director
U.S. Government Accountability Office
Natural Resources & Environment
Room 2T23
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

SUBJECT: GAO Report, "Hurricane Katrina – EPA's Current and Future Environmental Efforts Could Be Enhanced By Addressing Issues and Challenges Faced on the Gulf Coast"

Dear Sir:

For those of us that have been directly engaged in cleanup and recovery efforts during the 22 months since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the subject report is a very disappointing document. Although the report contains some segments of good information, it is riddled with unsubstantiated editorial comments, misleading statements and inaccuracies. It overtly promotes baseless allegations, while ignoring facts presented by professionals actually engaged in response to the hurricanes. It trumpets false alarms that create more anxiety for our citizens returning to their homes in the New Orleans area and is a disservice to all the professional environmental scientists, engineers, and regulators that worked so diligently to assure that cleanup and recovery from the hurricanes was accomplished expeditiously and in a manner protective of public health and the environment.

The report's abstract appears to us to have been prepared with a mission to impugn EPA. This mission was furthered by irresponsibly sensationalized headlines. For example, the 6/28/07 *Dallas Morning News* headline reads: "Katrina report: EPA lax – Residents cleanup volunteers exposed to asbestos, GAO says."

In an 18 page letter to GAO's Ms. Christine Fishkin, EPA aptly addressed concerns with several aspects of the report that they viewed as inaccurate or misleading. Although the letter is included in the text of the GAO report, this information appears to have been completely ignored in the report's abstract.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

: PO BOX 4301, BATON ROUGE, LA 70821-4301

P:225-219-3953 F:225-219-3971

WWW.DEQ.LOUISIANA.GOV

Robert A. Robinson
July 12, 2007
Page 2

In the accompanying attachment to this letter, we will provide responses to some of the more serious inaccuracies in the report, along with supporting facts and documentation. We trust that, upon review of our responses, you will understand why we feel the subject report failed to present an accurate and balanced treatment of the environmental issues associated with recovery efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Sincerely,



Mike D. McDaniel, Ph.D.
Secretary

c David M. Walker, Comptroller General, GAO
Christine Fishkin, Assistant Director, Natural Resources and Environment, GAO
U. S. Senator David Vitter
U. S. Senator Mary Landrieu
Governor Kathleen Blanco
Steven Johnson, Administrator, US EPA
Richard E. Greene, EPA Region 6 Administrator
Dr. Fred Cerise, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
Dr. Howard Frumkin, Director, National Center for Environmental Health/Agency
for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Brigadier General Robert Crear, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Steve Brown, Executive Director, Environmental Council of the States